

Thru the Bible Commentary
JOHN 16:1-16

THEME: *Jesus will send Holy Spirit during His absence*

This chapter concludes the Upper Room Discourse. We learned in the preceding chapter that His own should love one another. This is a real rebuke to us. It is a rebuke that He must command us to do that. It is a rebuke because it shows that we are not nearly as attractive as we think we are. We need help supernaturally to enable us to love one another. Then He told us that we are to identify with Him which will cause the world to hate us.

Also He told His disciples that if He had not come, they would not have known sin. He did not mean that they did not have their own sins but, that since He had come, their personal sins were as nothing compared to the immeasurable guilt of rejecting the Savior of the world and the Lord of glory.

There are not only degrees of rewards in heaven, but there are degrees of punishment in hell. The person today who hears about Jesus Christ and turns his back on Him is in the same category as Judas Iscariot who in the presence of Christ turned his back upon Him. To reject Him is the greatest sin of all. Jesus warns them about this in the coming chapter.

JESUS WILL SEND HOLY SPIRIT DURING HIS ABSENCE

The chapter begins with Jesus still talking about the hatred of the world.

These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended [John 16:1].

What things? The things mentioned in chapter 15.

They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.

And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me [John 16:2–3].

The Lord didn't want the apostles to be offended, that is, *scandalized* at what would happen to them. It is characteristic of founders of organizations, and especially of religions, to attempt to present a glorious future for their organizations. The method of the world is to build up the wonderful benefits and to play down the hardships and disadvantages and privations and sacrifices. How different our Lord is!

While it is true that in chapter 14 our Lord told us that He is going to prepare a place for us and that He will receive us unto Himself, He also makes it very clear that if we are going to follow Him down here, it means to forsake all. He said that foxes have holes and birds have nests, but He didn't have a place to lay His head. He said that if we are going to follow Him, we must take up our cross—not *His Cross*—*our* own cross, and follow Him. If we suffer with Him down here, we shall reign with Him up there. He was despised and rejected. He was a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief. He said His followers are going to be *in* the world but not *of* the world and that the world will hate them. He made all of that very clear. He never said that it would be easy for His followers down here.

The professing church, instead of taking the position of Christ, has gone out into the world, boasting that they are going to convert the world. They, of course, haven't done it in over nineteen hundred years. In their attempt they always try to popularize religion, make it very attractive to the world. You will find that today there are churches using all kinds of devices to attract the ungodly. Today music has come down to the level of the world. They say, "We have to do this to win the world." Who told them they were going to win the world? I'm not talking about liberal churches now—they went off the track years ago—I am talking about fundamental churches. Today fundamental churches are going off the track. In them you will find *enemies* of the Word of God! Although they wouldn't dare attack the Bible, they level their attack against the man who is preaching the Word of God.

There are tragic stories everywhere. I know a deacon in a church who has already destroyed three preachers. One man left broken in health, another simply left the ministry, and the third resigned. I know a minister who is selling second-hand cars. He says he would rather deal with second-hand cars than with second-hand Christians. Friend, if you stand for the Word of God, you will find that the world won't love you. You will experience the hatred that Christ experienced. "These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended." He is warning them ahead of time in order to strengthen them and let them know what is coming. He loves them right on through to the very end, and He lets them know that He will be with them and that He understands what they are going through.

He knew they would have moments when they would be offended because of Him. He knew that Peter would deny Him that very night. He told His disciples what would happen in order to encourage them and to let them know that He would sustain them through it all. He forewarned them to establish their responsibility to God.

"They shall put you out of the synagogues" means excommunication.

In that day to be excommunicated was the worst that could happen to a religious Jew. It would cost these men to stand for the Lord Jesus Christ. The religious Jews would cast them

out. My friend, I'm very candid to say again that if you are standing for Christ, it is going to cost you something.

Jesus again traces the source of the hatred. Because they do not know the Father, they do not know the Lord Jesus Christ. Also this is why the world hates the Word of God. This is why the world hates the genuine believer.

But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you [John 16:4].

He is letting them know what is coming and He is training them for what is to come. The Lord always prepares us, friend. During my years of being a pastor, I have learned that this is God's method. I have learned in my own experience and by watching others that the Lord trains and prepares us for that which lies ahead.

But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? [John 16:5].

It is true that Simon Peter had asked Him where He was going, but Peter had asked the question of a little child. He is saying that none of them has really discerned what is going to take place. None of them has asked intelligently, with spiritual perception.

But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart [John 16:6].

These men were letting the fact that He was going to leave them absolutely overwhelm them with sorrow. Friend, that is something which Christians today need to avoid. Many Christians let one experience embitter them. They experience some disappointment in an individual or in a church and are overwhelmed by sorrow and turn from God. Some people won't darken the door of a church because they are bitter over some incident in the past. Others who have lost loved ones remain constantly in mourning. This is not the way it should be. We are not to be overcome by sorrow.

Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you [John 16:7].

"It is expedient for you that I go away"—in other words, it is better for you. Why was it best for the Lord Jesus to leave? I can suggest several reasons and I'm sure you can think of more. One

of the reasons is this: His purpose in coming to this world was to die—“... the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). When this was accomplished, He went back to the Father because He had finished the work He was sent to do. Then, there is another reason: when He came to this earth, He took upon Himself our humanity. God is omnipresent, but Jesus limited Himself by becoming a man. That means that, when He was in Galilee, He could not be down in Bethany. Remember that Mary and Martha reminded Him of that when they said that, if He had been there, their brother would not have died. In other words, if the Lord Jesus were in the world today in His human body, He couldn’t be here where I am and with you where you are at the same time.

Therefore, He tells them He will send the Holy Spirit to them. The Holy Spirit will be in all places. He is right with me today and He is with you today. Jesus says this is better. He will send the Comforter, the Paraclete, and He will come to us and dwell in us.

When the Holy Spirit comes, He will perform several ministries, one of which He mentions here:

And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

Of sin, because they believe not on me;

Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more;

Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged [John 16:8–11].

The Greek word for “reprove” is *elegcho* which means “to convict.” I counted that word used in “The Trial of Socrates,” as recorded by Plato, and found it twenty-three times. It is a legal term. When the Holy Spirit is come, He will convict the world in the way a judge or a prosecuting attorney presents evidence to bring a conviction. The Spirit of God wants to present evidence in your heart and in my heart to bring us to a place of conviction, and that, of course, means a place of decision. There must be a conviction before we can turn in faith and trust to Jesus Christ.

In the present ministry of the Holy Spirit in the world, He will convict the world of three things: sin, righteousness, and judgment. Our Lord explains for us what that sin means. “Sin, because they believe not on me.” What is the greatest sin in all the world? Murder? No. Who are the greatest sinners in this age? We’ve had some rascals, haven’t we? Every age has had rascals. We might point out Hitler, or Stalin, or Karl Marx, or the Mafia. Well, who is the greatest sinner today? I want to say to you very carefully that *you* could be the greatest sinner living today. You may say, “Now wait a minute, preacher, you can’t say that about me! I’m no

rascal; I'm a law-abiding citizen." The question is this: Have you accepted Christ? Unbelief is a state and there is no remedy if you refuse to trust Christ. "Of sin, because they believe not on me." If you do not trust Him, you are lost. It is just as simple as that. It is just as important as that. This is a decision that every man must make. The man today, whoever he is, if he is rejecting Jesus Christ, is, in the sight of God, the greatest sinner. Remember that Jesus said, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin" (John 15:22). Everyone who has ever heard the gospel is responsible for his decision concerning Jesus Christ. To reject Christ is sin.

Secondly, He will convict the world of righteousness. Jesus Christ was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification (see Rom. 4:25). Jesus Christ returned to the Father because He had completed His work here. When He died on the Cross, He died a judgment death. He took my guilt and your guilt and He died in our place. He was delivered for our offenses. But He was raised for our justification. He was raised from the dead that you and I might not only have our sins subtracted, but so that we might have His righteousness added. That is very important because you and I need righteousness. It is not enough to have our sins forgiven. We cannot stand in God's presence if we are nothing more than pardoned criminals. Christ has made over to us *His* righteousness. That is the righteousness Paul spoke of: "... that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Phil 3:8-9). He not only subtracts our sin, but He adds His righteousness. If we are to have any standing before God, we must be in Christ and He is our righteousness. Either we have as much right in heaven as Christ Himself has, or we have no right there at all. He was delivered for our offenses, and He was raised again for our justification (righteousness).

Thirdly, He convicts the world of judgment. Does this mean that judgment is coming some day? No, not in this verse. "Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." The prince of this world, Satan, has already been judged. It is difficult for a great many believers to understand that we live in a judged world. One hears people say that they'll take their chances. They act as if they are on trial. My friend, you are not on trial. God has already declared you a lost sinner, and He has already judged you—"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23). We live in a world that has already been judged and is like the man waiting in death row for his execution. The judgment against all of us is "Guilty" because all our own righteousnesses are as filthy rags in the sight of God. If we had to stand before God in our own filthy rags, we would not only be ashamed of ourselves, but we would also see how guilty we are.

Remember that Paul reasoned with old Felix concerning judgment to come. That frightened him. Today many people don't like to hear about judgment, and they resent it a great deal. The lost world hates many things about God: for instance, His omnipotence. They don't like the fact that it is His universe and He is running it His way. They don't like it that God saves by grace and that man has already been declared lost. These are the three things of which the Holy Spirit convicts the world today.

I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you [John 16:12–14].

We don't know it all. We are to keep growing in grace and in the knowledge of Him. How can we do it? Just reading the Bible is not the complete answer; the Holy Spirit must be our Teacher as we read.

The Spirit of God is the Spirit of Truth. He will lead and guide you into all truth. He guided the apostles just as the Lord said He would, and we find these truths in the Epistles. The Spirit of God came to these men at Pentecost, and He guided them in the truth both in their preaching and in their writing.

We can see how this was fulfilled in the apostles. The ministry of the Holy Spirit has been to complete the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Epistles glorify Christ and show Him as the Head of the church. They speak of His coming again to establish His Kingdom. The Epistles are the unfolding of the person and ministry of Christ. They also tell of things to come and certainly the Book of Revelation does this.

Notice the seven steps that are here: (1) The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, has come; (2) He will guide you into all truth; (3) He will not speak of Himself; (4) He shall speak whatsoever He shall hear; (5) He will show you things to come; (6) He shall glorify Jesus; and (7) He shall receive of mine and show it unto you.

Since we have been told these steps, we have a way of testing what we hear and read. I listened to a man on a radio program saying, "We are having a Holy Ghost revival; the Holy Ghost is working; the Holy Ghost is doing this and that." The minute he said all those things, I knew the Holy Ghost was not working. Why? Because the Lord Jesus made it very clear that the Holy Ghost will not speak of Himself. Then how can you tell when the Holy Spirit is working? He

will glorify Christ. My friend, when in a meeting or a Bible study you suddenly get a glimpse of the Lord Jesus and He becomes wonderful, very real, and meaningful to you, that is the working of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, “He shall glorify *me*.”

All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you [John 16:15].

Again the Lord Jesus is making Himself equal with God. Whatever the Father has, Jesus has. “He shall take of mine” means He will take the things of God and show them unto us. Only He can do that. “... Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit ...” (1 Cor. 2:9–10). The Spirit is the One who searches the deep things of God and He alone can show these things to us.

A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father [John 16:16].

What did He mean? He meant that He would be arrested, and they would be scattered like sheep and separated from Him. He’d be crucified and buried. He would be absent a little while and they wouldn’t see Him. On the third day He would come back, and so in a little while they would see Him. This has a fuller, richer, deeper meaning for us today.¹

¹ J. Vernon McGee, [*Thru the Bible Commentary: The Gospels \(John 11-21\)*](#), electronic ed., vol. 39 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991), 104–113.